

THE *SPECIAL EDITION - FIELD EXERCISE (FEX) '03* Buzzword

The official publication of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE, "The Professionals," Port Hueneme, Calif.

"The Professionals" complete Bearing Duel '03

FORT HUNTER-LIGGETT, Calif. - Despite torturous heat and rugged terrain, Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) Five successfully completed its annual two-week Field Exercise (FEX), Bearing Duel '03, at this sprawling training base located northeast of the Battalion's homeport in Port Hueneme.

To participate in a two-week field exercise when the daily air temperature hovers near the century mark takes stamina and determination. "The Professionals" proved they had both. For anyone who's ever put on a chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) suit - commonly known as a chemical protective over-garment, or CPO - they know it's stifling enough in normal weather conditions. Add Arabian Gulf-like summer temps to the equation, and you've just upped the physiological challenge. "The Professionals" conquered the challenge.

"The whole point of FEX was to assess, 'Are we ready for war?'" said NMCB-5 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Richard Cook. "Because we have some new people in senior leadership roles in the Battalion, I didn't have a good feeling when we started FEX. I now feel we're ready to go anywhere in the world to do our job."

The 31st Seabee Readiness Group (SRG) training team, easily recognized by the white tape on their camouflaged covers, was omnipresent in base camp. Under their watchful eyes, "The Professionals" were graded for their combat skills and overall battle readiness. From Charlie and Alfa Companies manning the front lines in man-made fighting positions, to the RE-ACT security team keeping close watch for intruders in camp, "The Professionals" were manned and ready. From Headquarters Company Seabees performing communication duty in the combat operation center (COC), to Bravo Company Seabees doing valuable camp maintenance, "The Professionals" were alert and cautious. These were just a few of the areas that were put under the training microscope.

All types of "conditions" and "alerts" were called



BU3 David Forrest of the Air Detachment mans his fighting position during Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03.

while the training group graded and critiqued every move, decision and order that the command's small unit leaders provided. They looked for efficiency and timeliness during drills. The trainers graded on effective communication between the company command posts and the COC.

There were spot events, too, that were observed but not graded by 31st SRG. Take the two grass fires that resulted from a flare star cluster on the evening of Aug. 17. Seabees applied their "Can Do" spirit to extinguish both fires with whatever water they had available - from water trucks to canteens. Some Seabees even used their uniform blouses.

FEX veterans and rookies alike worked side by

side on projects and on watches. For Builder Constructionman Kasper Wallace, a native of Longview, Texas, it was her first FEX. From listening to her, you'd think she never got enough of the camaraderie during FEX.

"I dug it all," said Wallace as she worked with fellow Charlie Company Seabees at the timber tower project. "My feet hurt from doing patrols, but I loved it. We busted our butts on the timber tower project, and I loved that, too."

"During FEX, I saw a lot of leadership potential in our young Seabees," said Steelworker 1st Class

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Bravo Co.: Security team




The Battalion's security team was at the ready throughout FEX, supporting the "peace keepers" by doing patrols and convoy escorts. (see story and photos, page 5)

Charlie Co.: Assembling a bridge



Before Charlie Co. set up their post operating area, they did what Seabees have been doing since World War II. They erected and placed a Bailey bridge over a creek. (see story and photos, page 8)

MILES 2000: Strapping it on



For the first time on a field exercise, Seabees from "The Professionals" strapped on the newest version of MILES gear for combat simulation training. (see story and photos, page 9)



Cmdr. Richard Cook
NMCB-5 Commanding Officer

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

A FEX of Extremes

As I look back over the past few weeks and try to characterize the Battalion's performance throughout the whole field exercise, or FEX, evolution, I can't help but classify this one as one of extremes. The most extreme element of this year's FEX had to be the temperature, which frequently soared past 110 degrees during the heat of the day and fell to below 50 degrees in the chill of the night. Imagine going from sweating so much you have to drink a quart of water every hour to maintaining your fluids during the day, to eating hot soup in your fighting hole to keep from shivering through the night?

The other extreme was morale. Throughout FEX, I was proud to see our troops' morale remain at a high level. I'm not sure if it was the great chow served in our galley (the ice cream sundaes were a huge hit), or the fact that we got to "really" kill the bad guys (kind of like laser tag). In any event, our troops performed like true professionals. I am extremely confident that we are now ready to handle any Seabee mission anywhere in the world.

Navy News Brief ...

What's a FEX?

Exercise Bearing Duel is a tactical field exercise administered by the 31st Seabee Readiness Group (31st SRG). Such tactical field exercises are called within the Seabee community a "FEX." The FEX represents the culmination of the Seabee military training block and is used in order to demonstrate unit construction proficiency and military readiness.

Exercise Bearing Duel is a contingency operation held at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. In this year's exercise, Seabees from both NMCB-5 and Naval Reserve NMCB-15 participated, along with some 100 31st SGR personnel who facilitated the exercise scenario. This scenario is more realistic, as Fort Hunter Liggett is designated as a foreign country, "Coastland," a fledgling democracy that recently won independence from a larger, more capable neighbor.

The "Centralians" wish to stop U.S. forces trying to support "Coastland" with regular forces and guerrilla operations, including chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) attack capabilities. In the scenario, with full preparations of operation orders and other deployment-related tasks, the two battalions were tasked to set up a forward operating base, provide a full 360-degree defensive perimeter, and support various construction tasks. These tasks included rapid runway repair, digging and setup of water wells, timber towers, Seabee Engineering Reconnaissance Team (SERT) surveys of remote roads, construction of specialized and general use buildings, and several other demanding projects.

The 31st SRG, aided by a contingency of Marines with mixed uniform clothing and weaponry, tested the Battalion's capabilities by giving several simulated contingency scenarios such as conventional arms and CBR attacks, simulated medical emergencies, civilian disturbances, among other challenges, to test our response and capability to "build and fight."

The first deployment of troops was the Air Detachments (Air Det). In the case of Exercise Bearing Duel, the Battalions had to also plan and prepare for a near full-strength operation with the full set of Table of Allowance, individual gear, tools, consumables, and

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF'S CORNER

Which one of these young Seabees will be a future command master chief?



project materials as if we were deploying for an extended period.

For a Seabee battalion's supply officer, the task of planning and ensuring all the "stuff" got to the fight was a very involved and detailed process. Since FEX was a tactical scenario, Supply couldn't just send a truck to pick up equipment or material that was forgotten. In nearly all cases, if the Battalions didn't plan or ask for it, it was not going to be available. Even food and fuel resupply convoys, which were sent to the containment area of Fort Hunter Liggett, had to be fully tactical with security teams and the possibility of attack and denial of mission. Thus, if something was needed or missing, the supply officer could not just

say "Sure, I'll make a run to the base," because in the scenario, it didn't exist. In short, the Battalions had to plan and execute the logistics operation with very little room for error.

Both Battalion's mount outs included night load and off load operations. The personnel and equipment for the Battalion Air Det was loaded at Pt. Mugu Naval Air Station and flown to Fort Hunter Liggett, where they soon proceeded with convoy operations with their equipment to reach their designated forward operating base objective for camp setup.

With the successful completion of FEX, the Battalion is ready to begin its deployment cycle later this year.

"The Professionals" speak out ...

Something you should have brought on FEX.



EOCN Adam Eisel, Copenhagen, N.Y., Headquarters: "I should have brought more magazines, like (smile) Sports Illustrated."

BU3 Matt Rutledge, St. Louis, Mo., Charlie Co.: "I brought everything but chap stick and insect repellent."



EOCN Peter Izarra, Lake Elsinore, Calif., Alfa Co.: "I should have brought bug spray. The mosquitoes ate me up."

UT2(SCW) Michael Schlosser, New York City, Bravo Co.: "A radio so I could've kept up with the news, and maybe listen to a little music."



JO1(SW) Scott Sutherland, Bandon, Ore., Headquarters: "I should have brought protein bars. I'd like to think they're good for me."

Air Detachment takes air route into training site

While Seabees in the advanced party, or AP, were transported via busses into the operating area here Aug. 9 for Bearing Duel '03, members of the Battalion's Air Detachment were treated to a tactical scenario as they flew into the operating area.

Boarding C-130 Hercules aircraft flown by pilots assigned to Channel Islands Air National Guard at Point Mugu, Seabees flew into Schoonover Airstrip

After their respective flights landed here, each Seabee then helped with the offload of cargo and assisting where needed in the subsequent flights. "It was a rapid turnaround," said Pryor. "In 10 minutes, the plane was off and heading back to get the next chalk at Mugu."

Members of the Air Detachment set up camp along the runway for three days before packing out and moving into the forward operating base.

The Battalion's Air Detachment is capable of deploying within 48 hours during contingency operations. Last fall, the Air Det was instrumental in pre-hostility efforts in Kuwait when the Battalion was on its 2002-03 European Deployment.



CM3 Brock Fowble of Air Det sets his sites on "enemy" intruders in camp.

here on five different flights throughout the day. Each flight flew in a tactical mode, meaning the pilots maneuvered their respective aircraft as if they were actually in a combat situation receiving artillery ground fire attacks. In a real life situation, members of the Air Det might actually fly aboard aircraft under enemy fire.

Seven Seabees, along with one piece of civil engineer support equipment (CESE), were aboard the first flight, commonly known as a chalk. It took about 40 minutes to arrive from Naval Air Station Point Mugu to the isolated landing strip located at the army base about 200 miles northeast of Port Hueneme. One of the passengers, Utilitiesman 3rd Class Jeffrey Pryor of Festus, Mo., said that when the flight took off, "we went right into tactical mode, flying 75 feet above the ocean."

"We tipped our wing at a fisherman," recalled Pryor. "He looked up at us, openmouthed. I wondered what was going through his mind."

Pryor said the aircraft topped out at 1,000 feet, doing a series of turns and tactical maneuvers. "I felt the negative 'Gs' when we did our rolls and turns," said Pryor. "I had my leg resting on the chain of the 5-ton dump truck and I felt the compression."

Pryor noted that he was one of three Seabees on board who didn't get sick from the maneuvers and negative gravity.

The same can't be said for Builder 1st Class William Reider, a native of Middleton, Pa. Doing his first stint as part of the 125-member Air Det, Reider said he'd "do it all again," despite the physical effects of his first ride aboard a C-130 Hercules.

"Riding with negative gravity messed up my mind," said Reider. "It was like a non-stop roller coaster ride. The landing was like being in a car accident."

The landing at the airstrip could be compared to a landing a C-2 Greyhound, commonly known as carrier onboard delivery, or COD, flight on an aircraft carrier. Those are normally referred to as a "controlled crash."

Air Det: TURD 'n all

While most of NMCB FIVE was engaged in this year's Field Exercise, members of the NMCB FIVE Air Detachment had their own FEX about 15 miles away. Every year on FEX, the Air Det breaks away from the main body to test their combat readiness and ability to deploy as a rapid response unit. The Air Det is comprised of 125 personnel, who have the same abilities as a full size Battalion, just on a smaller scale.

Starting on the 7th of August, members of the Air Det began staging equipment at Schoonover Airstrip in preparation for the arrival of the rest of Air Det. The main party arrived in style on the 9th, flying into the Area of Operations aboard five C-130 flights. From there, the Air Det participated in some intense training, did some final preparations, and moved all 125 personnel to our Forward Operating Base (FOB).

"The time we had at the Airstrip was very beneficial to our troops. It allowed them to get focused on the task at hand and fine tune their skills before we moved into our area of responsibility," said Officer-in-Charge Lt. Brian Weinstein, a native of Minnesota.

According the 31st Seabee Readiness Group (31SRG) who facilitated the Field Exercise, the Air Det did a superb job in all facets of the operation.

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THE BUZZWORD

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Back Cover Photo:

Seabees with the Battalion's Air Detachment build a medium girder bridge.

FEX Intranet communications better than ever

"We had higher speed and lower drag."

No, that wasn't a comment made by a NASCAR driver after a Sunday victory. Rather, it was made by Builder 1st Class (SCW) Ronald Johnson in reference to the Battalion's tactical data network used during Field Exercise, Bearing Duel '03.

"In the past, we'd use a desktop server to pass along tactical information in camp," said the Canandaigua, N.Y., native. "For the first time on FEX, we used a state-of-the-art field expedient network, or FEN. We processed and sent information via intranet faster than ever."

Why is this so important on FEX? Because all the major hubs of communications in camp - company command posts (CPs), the combat operation center (COC) and the alternate COC (ACOC) - need information as soon as possible in order for the decision makers to make the best decision in a tactical environment. In order for that to happen, according to Utilitiesman 2nd Class Alex Smith, the system communications team, or SYSCOM, had to install laptops, printers and cables

to each CP and to the COCs of both NMCB-5 and NMCB-15, a Reserve battalion serving as 5's adjacent unit.

"Our goal was to provide intranet service so all the centers could have e-mail access, and so they could

Systems Communication (SYSCOM)

share data internally," said Smith, a native of Tucson, Ariz., and a member of the SYSCOM team.

According to Johnson, the system was similar to the one he used in Kuwait during the Battalion's recent European Deployment. "It was an experimental model for FEX," he said, "meaning we tried to work some bugs out of it. For instance, the heat slowed down the central processing unit's ability to process information."

Although they only had the server on line for four days, the work put into getting it online was staggering. "We ran over 5,000 feet of fiber optic cable and

over 2,000 feet of category 5 network cable from SYSCOM to the command centers," said Johnson. "Fiber optic can run up to seven miles before transmission is lost, while Cat 5 runs only 330 feet before a signal is lost."

Fiber optic utilizes light to transmit data while Cat 5 is comprised of a series of paired copper cables and relies on electrical transmission signals.

After the system was installed and the users were on line, the SYSCOM team did maintenance every 12 hours, dusting and wiping off the computers, and making sure each one was in good working order.

"In the hot, dusty environment like what we had on FEX, it's important to keep the equipment clean," said Smith. "Dust blocks the transfer of heat on the circuitry, which cuts off the flow of air."

Without the tactical network, the command centers would have relied solely on the radio systems, which might've slowed down the immediacy of commands and tactical decisions. That's something that no combat fighting machine needs to risk.

FEX wrapup, from page 1

Fernando Banda, who's seen more than his share of field exercises. "Take BUCN Wallace, for instance. She stepped up and took charge. I've never seen anyone so young be able to inspire the people around her the way she did. When she talked, people listened. She had a quiet way about her. She didn't have to scream or yell to get her point across."

Another "war vet" of past field exercises, Engineering Aide 1st Class (SCW) Donald Fallon of Klamath Falls, Ore., said this year's training was one of the easiest ever for him. For Fallon, spending four months in Kuwait earlier this year supporting the global war on terrorism made the two-week FEX a piece of cake.

"The watch I stood on FEX {fire support center} was the same type of watch I stood in Kuwait," said Fallon. "Doing an 8-hour shift on FEX was nothing. You either have nothing to do or there's sheer terror when a million things happen at once."

Besides all the conditions and alerts announced over the camp's loudspeaker, the most common word on FEX was "hydrate." Representatives from the Battalion's Medical Department couldn't say that enough. Wherever they went - in camp and on the front lines - they shouted, "Hydrate," to every Seabee within the sound of their voices. And for good reason. Medical personnel took daily wet-bulb air temperature readings anywhere from 92 to 96 degrees, which translated to dry-bulb temperatures between 106 to 110 degrees.

On the final day of FEX, 11 Seabees received "on-the-spot" Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals for their accomplishments during the exercise. In addition, two Seabees were advanced to third class petty officer and another earned his Seabee Combat Warfare device.

Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03 is now part of NMCB-5's history. When all was said and done, a huge portion of the Seabees had shed a few extra pounds of body weight, but gained a better knowledge and understanding of basic combat skills. It's those two factors that made each and every Seabee assigned to "The Professionals" that much more capable of carrying out the combat mission of the Battalion and, subsequently, of the Navy.



The Charlie Co. timber tower crew assembles the tower, which was eventually set in place (inset) using a forklift. A crew of 12 Seabees battled the heat for over four days, including days when their work was delayed because of heat index precautions.

Camp Security

Patrols on parade

Whether they were doing foot patrols inside the camp or conducting convoy escorts outside of camp, the Battalion's security team during Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03 was at the ready supporting the "peace keeping" force while it was doing its mission here.

The 27-member security force was made up of Bravo Company Seabees. Taking on varied tasks and busy as ever, protecting the camp from being breached by aggressors.

Besides around-the-clock patrols, the security team provided protection at the combat operation center, or COC. According to the security platoon commander, Construction Electrician 1st Class Adrian Cotton, two Seabees doing 6-hour watches were posted 24-7 at the outer perimeter of COC. One of their jobs was controlling the access to COC, making sure all those who entered the command center had authorization to do so.

"We'd do our challenges right outside of COC," said Cotton. "When there was a breach of security and a Condition Red was called, we'd then man four foxholes inside the COC compound."

Also during Condition Red, Seabees manned 24 fighting positions inside the camp, supplementing the patrols provided by the REACT squad, also made up of Bravo Company Seabees.

Besides their responsibilities in the camp, the security team also provided armed escorts for all convoys leaving camp. The three-man escort teams - a driver, communicator and gunner - used two Humvees to escort vehicles and passengers heading to Camp Blackjack, which was the tactical unit assembly area prior to the actual field exercise, on administrative trips back to Battalion headquarters in Port Hueneme, and other tasks when required. Each Humvee was equipped with M2 and M60 weapons.

Last but not least, the security team did mobile patrols. "When we weren't doing escort patrols, then we did patrols in camp," said Cotton. "As you can tell, the only down time we had was used to get our required six hours of sleep. I made sure we all did that."

During Condition Backfire (breach in camp) there are 24 fighting positions that needed to be manned. "All members of the team responded so we had to have all our weapons available," said Cotton.

As security platoon commander, Cotton said his job during FEX was "overwhelming," organizing his squads and assigning them patrols, and coordinating with Alfa Company's dispatch center for convoy support.

Bravo Company was also responsible for camp maintenance and the REACT security force. Members from NMCB-15 also augmented the REACT force.



Top: CE1(SCW) Adrian Cotton gives a morning patrol brief.

Condition Eagle: Relocating combat central

One minute it's quiet throughout base camp. "All conditions are normal" is the status for the moment. Then in the next minute, faster than a blink of an eye, "Condition Eagle, Condition Eagle" is sounded.

For a large majority of Seabees in camp, when Condition Eagle is announced, they'll stop hammering or stop digging a trench for a moment and wonder, "What does that mean?" But for a small majority of Seabees, Condition Eagle means all hell is breaking loose in their world.

For Seabees working their 6- or 8-hour shifts in the combat operation center (COC) when Condition Eagle was announced here, it meant one thing and one thing only - a catastrophic event that could compromise the Battalion's mission.

For training purposes, Condition Eagle was a simulated drill in which the COC, "the brain housing group of base camp," was under attack and could possibly be taken out of commission. What made the event so catastrophic is that there was top-level classified information in the COC that could be devastating in the hands of the enemy, which in the case of Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03, was the tyranni-

cal nation of "Centralia." The importance of Condition Eagle is that when the enemy takes out the COC, then for all intents and purposes, they've closed the eyes and plugged the ears of the friendly force, in this case, the freedom fighters of NMCB-5.

Once Condition Eagle was announced, all operations that were once in the COC were shifted to the alternate COC, or ACOC, located some distance away from the former main COC. The shift was controlled and calculated, with armed patrols from the REACT security team escorting Seabees to their new location.

According to Personnelman 2nd Class (SCW/AW) Gary Hudson, the watch supervisor for the communications team that happened to be working during the drill, the communications team "busted their humps" to make the shift go smoothly.

"We made sure all communication networks, from the battalion tactical and battalion command, to the alert broadcast and high frequency (HF) data, were shifted in a timely and efficient manner," said Hudson.

Amid the cacophony and extreme heat in the ACOC, all the teams, including the



Even though it was practice, the tension was high during one of the Condition Eagle drills in the alternate combat operation center.

board standers and watch officer, raced the clock to get the eyes and ears seeing and hearing again. Once it was over and the brows wiped of perspiration, loud cheers and high fives went up inside the tent.

"Normally, we take what we can with us as we're being escorted to the ACOC," said Hudson. "The watch chief normally stays behind in the COC and goes through emergency destruction procedures, destroying everything that would compromise our mission. Compromised informa-

tion could be anything left in the radios like information we used to communicate with each other, and even radio signals. We don't want the enemy to get their hands on this information.

Hudson said the watch team would first take control of all radios, either destroying them or moving them to the ACOC. Next, old maps showing locations and messages with important data would also be destroyed or moved.

"In an ideal situation and as a last resort, the watch chief would actually unload his ammunition rounds into radios and other equipment to ensure they won't be breached," added Hudson.

Evaluators from the 31st Seabee Readiness Group graded the evolution for its effectiveness and how quickly the team got the networks back on line at the new location.

"There are usually a lot of distractions in this already stressful situation, especially when we know these drills are being graded," said Hudson.

By the sounds of the hoots, hollers and high fives, you'd think it was a real-life situation, and that they just gave themselves an A+.

A glimpse of Seabees on



Seabees take advantage of the first hot meal (excluding MREs) on FEX.



SW3 Karie Hopper applies sunscreen and CM1 Daren Bathrick passes the word from a man-made fighting position.



Members of communications section three prepare for the final night's showdown in the command operations center.



This is not a staged shot. Really: EOCA Angela George checks the horizon for the enemy.



FEX



Movie call in the MWR tent.



SK3 Mei Ferguson under Medical care at the basic aide station.



BUCA Kasper Wallace



CM3 Wesley Echelbarger seems in a bit of a rush.



Field work: The Dental Department was able to get some field dentistry accomplished on FEX. Here, Lt. Andrew Varga (left) and DT3 Charles Bumgard work on a patient.



(left) BU3 Ward Lawrence on the Bailey Bridge crew and (right) EA2 Moises Malong during MILES gear issue.



BU3 Mark Pacheco does his daily (bi-weekly?) chore.

Charlie Company assembles Bailey bridge

Before Charlie Company set up their command post operating area here, they had to establish permanent access across a small creek. So they did what Seabees have been doing since World War II, they erected and placed a Bailey bridge over the creek.

Charlie, the Battalion's construction company, pre-staged the temporary bridge on Aug. 10 while the Battalion's main body was at Camp Blackjack preparing to enter the forward operating base. Working in temperatures that reached the mid-90s, a 16-member team from Charlie spent about 10 hours erecting the bridge after a survey team had earlier established how much of the bridge span was needed to do the work.

"We rolled out of Blackjack on two convoys with all the bridge parts and Seabees we needed to do the work," said crew leader Builder 1st Class (SCW) James Mason. "We off loaded all the parts and staged it in different areas along the creek bed."

The first step was making sure six bridge rollers were set, which meant a path had to be cleared across the creek. "Part of that process was making sure the rollers were set at the right bank height at the other side," said Mason. "The survey team established the bank height and length of bridging we needed."

Next, after the correct spacing was established for the rollers, the first set of panels were put on the rollers and held in place by the Seabees. The next panels were then pinned to the first set.

"At that point, you actually have your first Bailey



Seabees on the Bailey bridge project put a panel in place. The 16-member crew took about two workdays to assemble and place the temporary span.



BU3 Kevin Anderson (foreground) and BU2 Jeremy Tipping give ol' heave ho.

erected," said Mason. "After that, you start building back with panels and transoms."

Because so many Seabees on this particular crew had never erected a Bailey bridge before, this evolution was considered part training and part operational. "We had three Seabees who actually knew how to erect and place this type of bridge," said Mason. "It was good experience for the rest of the crew, getting a good bird's eye view about how it goes."

For those more experienced Seabees on site, they received their skills during advanced base field construction, or ABFC, courses at Construction Battalion Center (CBC) Port Hueneme.

Training evaluators from the 31st Seabee Readiness Group were on hand to grade the Seabees on the work they did. According to Mason, evaluators critiqued the bridge crew in numerous areas, including teamwork, how fast the bridge went up, and quality control issues.

When deciding where the bridge would go, Mason said the survey team "selected the shortest gap they could find" along the creek. "You don't want to cross a 60-meter gap when a 30-meter gap is available," he said. "If it wasn't for the bridge, Charlie Company wouldn't have been able to use the site."

Mason said, as far as he knows, this is the first Seabee FEX in which a Bailey bridge was erected and placed.

Builder Constructionman Apprentice Kasper Wallace, a native of Longview, Texas, was part of the team that put the bridge together. She was one of the many Seabees there that day who had never been on a Bailey bridge project.

"It was neat how it was assembled," said Wallace. "Then all you had to do was push it over the creek. Sure, it was heavy, but there really wasn't a lot to it."

The bridge was disassembled by most of the same crew that erected it. It was taken back to Camp Blackjack, where it'll be used for future training evolutions.



SW2 Anthony Cardona tightens a SAT.



UT2 Darryn Neson makes a "kill" with a MILES controller

New MILES gear used on Bearing Duel '03

Utilitiesman 2nd Class Darryn Nelson lined his sites on the target. He fired. Instead of nailing a bulls eye, the Chicago, Ill., native activated a sensor device attached to a fellow Seabee's chest.

It was all part of a training session here in which Seabees were equipped with the most updated version of the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System 2000, commonly known as MILES, prior to Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03.

MILES 2000, which went on line in May 2000, is one of the most commonly used engagement simulation subsystems for ground-instrumented training. MILES implements a direct-laser engagement system in which multiple laser bursts of pulse-coded data are sent from the shooter to a target equipped with MILES laser sensors. The coded bursts contain shooter identification and weapon-type codes as well as strings of kill codes.

For Paul Minor, a MILES trainer with UNITECH Systems based out of Marine Corps Station 29 Palms, Calif., NMCB-5's FEX '03 was his fourth using the new equipment. He's now cycled the new gear through all four battalions based at Port Hueneme. Minor, who's been a MILES trainer for three years, was on scene throughout the field exercise troubleshooting the equipment and being the overall subject matter expert on the MILES equipment.

The new equipment replaces the old MILES gear that was notorious for being too easily tampered with, especially the battery. Experts like Minor say it was too easy to cheat with the old gear.

"The new gear is more accurate and less cheat proof," said Minor. "By far, it's a better piece of gear than the old MILES. Unlike the previous equipment, you can't remove the battery in MILES 2000. The gear tells us what you did wrong, as well as telling us what you did right."

Each Seabee received a small arms transmitter attached to the M16 rifle, a halo head harness, and a body harness. The training staff handles controller devices, similar to the one Nelson used. The controller stores training data, which gets transferred to a data processing control unit. The information is transferred again to a computer, which reads out pertinent information about "kills" based on a player's identification number, or PIN.

"Using the player ID number, trainers can find out pertinent information, like who shot who, whether or not it was friendly fire, time, date and what type of weapon was used," said Minor. "If needed, we can download the information in the field. With the controller gun, we can tell what you're doing."

According to Minor, the location of the field exercise and the hot weather played a small role in the gear's function. "Because of those conditions, about 8 percent of the gear engaged without provocation."

As for the Seabees who actually used MILES 2000 on FEX, they say that it's not as bulky as the old gear, and that it's easier to work with.

Builder 1st Class Ronald Johnson of Canandaigua, N.Y., said, "UNITECH eliminated ways for people to cheat. People could take out batteries in the old gear. You can't do that with the new gear."

As for it being easy to use, Johnson said it straps to the body the same way the old equipment did. "I like the added feature of the breakaway Velcro tie," he said.

Every Seabee on FEX who was assigned an M16 rifle was issued MILES gear at Camp Blackjack, the tactical unit assembly area where Seabees stayed before heading into the forward operating base. Members of the Battalion's Air Detachment also received their gear and training while they were staged at Schoonover Airstrip.



Paul Minor (right) uses BUCA Devan Wallace as a volunteer to show how the MILES harness works.

MWR provides valuable morale booster

For Seabees who spent time at Camp Moreell construction compound in Kuwait during the Battalion's most recent deployment, they remember the huge Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tent there that offered around the clock entertainment and a place to relax.

Even though it was on a much smaller scale, the MWR facility here during FEX served a similar purpose - it gave Seabees a chance to get out of the intense heat, to kick back and unwind after a hard day's work. "We were there for the troops," said Utilitiesman 1st Class John Valk of Middletown, Conn., the senior MWR assistant during FEX.

"Since I've been in the Seabees, this is the first time a battalion's ever had anything like this - an area where Seabees could watch movies and enjoy snacks," said Valk. "It was a great service."

The decision to have an MWR tent was unprecedented for Seabee field exercises. Normally during a FEX, MWR would sell snacks and drinks out of the back of a trailer. This year's facility was like no other during previous field exercises because MWR offered movies in an "auditorium" setting (chairs arranged under the open-air tent).

"Even when we were asleep, we'd wake up and serve our customers," said Valk.

With NMCB-5 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Richard Cook's blessing, representatives of the Battalion's MWR program in coordination with the Supply Department bought a full-screen television and two large coolers, specifically for FEX. In addition, movies, and plenty of snacks and drinks to support the troops, were purchased before FEX. "We stocked up before we left homeport," said Valk. "We bought 38 cases of soda, 30 cases of water and 24 cases of Gatorade. Gatorade was our biggest seller on FEX."

"Whenever we ran out of product, we made sure more was bought during administrative convoy runs. With the profits we made on FEX, we could've paid for the TV and refrigerators."

Profits from MWR sales were put back in the program's coffers to be used for command-sponsored



BU2 Tony Lent finds a frozen sports drink in the cooler.

events and functions.

To help support the cause, the other MWR customer service representative, Builder 2nd Class Tony Lent of Grant, Fla., brought about 40 movies from his own collection.

As in the past, MWR made customer purchases easier by offering laminated punch cards for \$10 apiece. All Seabees had to do was buy the cards and then present them for purchases. "The whole concept behind the cards was that we didn't want to have to deal with small change on FEX," said Valk. "If someone brought us big bills, then we could sell the cards in the field. It was convenient

both for the customer and for us."

For the most part, MWR customers were satisfied with the products and service. There were times when you couldn't find an empty seat in the "house," based on what movie happened to be playing. Valk added that some Seabees were disappointed that they didn't serve coffee, even though the galley provided java right next door to MWR.

Overall, the MWR tent filled many needs - a meeting place for squad leaders, a training site for the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System, or MILES, team, and, of course, a place to decompress with a snack and beverage after an intense drill in the hot weather.

Reserve 'bees augment "The Professionals"

They came all the way from the Midwest to support "The Professionals" during Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03. They helped erect the camp shower tent. They cooked evening meals. They stood watches in the combat operation center.

These tasks and many more were performed by Naval Reservists from NMCB-15 during their two-week annual training, or AT, held here. Some Reservists used the training they received while on active duty, while others applied the skills they use in their civilian jobs. Either way, about 130 Reservists played an active role in FEX, battling the heat and "aggressors" alongside their active-duty counterparts.

NMCB-15's headquarters is in Belton, Mo. The Battalion is comprised of eight detachment sites in five states - Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Despite attending a mini-training FEX here last year, Naval Reserve Storekeeper 2nd Class Martha Torvik of Marion, Iowa, considered Bearing Duel '03 her inaugural field exercise. "This was my first full FEX," said Torvik, an accountant in civilian life. "The best part for me was working with other Seabees and seeing us accomplish the same mission."

When she wasn't working in the Battalion's Supply Department, Torvik stood communications watches in the Battalion's COC.

Naval Reserve Builder 1st Class Kirk Branum, a native of Kansas City, Mo., who owns a home remodeling business, said the highlight of his two-week training was honing his management skills. "With five people working for me, FEX was the first time I really tested my skills as a manager," said Branum, who super-

vised the Battalion's communications shop during FEX. "I watched people I don't know come together and perform.



HM3 Paula Jeffries of St. Louis, Mo., changes an intravenous bag in the BAS.

We got past a few hurdles before getting our communications system on line."

Naval Reservists often augment NMCB-5. Most recently, during the Battalion's 2002-03 European Deployment, Reservists from NMCB-27 based out of Brunswick, Me., lent support on different projects at Naval Station Rota, Spain, including work at an MWR dining facility, the bachelor housing parking lot, and the security perimeter fence. Some of the same Reserve Seabees were re-deployed to Kuwait in support of the global war against terrorism, Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Whatever jobs the Naval Reservists did during Field Exercise Bearing Duel '03, they were a welcomed presence for "The Professionals." Without their experience and enthusiasm, FEX wouldn't have been the same.

NMCB Five FEX Awards and Recognition



BU2 Jeffrey Pate reenlists. NMCB-5 CO Cmdr. Richard Cook presents Pate with a spouse's letter of appreciation.



EOCA Dustin Smith is presented a Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal for the work he did on FEX.



While the rest of the Battalion watched, CM3 Wesley Echelbarger is pinned with a Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

Air Det, from page 3

The 31SRG tested the Air Det's response to Chemical, Biological, and Radiological (CBR) attacks, armed aggressors at the front lines, angry civilians at the gate, and even the destruction of the Air Det Combat Operation Center (COC). Air Det passed all tests with flying colors.

The last big hurdle of the FEX was the TURD, or Tactical Unit Relocation Drill. Here, the Air Det was hit with a notional persistent chemical agent, forcing them to pick up, leave its site, and get decontaminated

Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal

UT2 Aaron Vincent
CE2 Christopher Dael
EO2 Erik Jackson
BU2 Raymond Wright
BU2 Jeffrey Pate
UT3 John Scott
CM3 Wesley Echelbarger
ET3 Agustin Ramos
EA3 Alex Sanchezaguirre
MSSN Lindsey Pulley
EOCA Dustin Smith

Seabee Combat Warfare

UT3 William Kahane

Advanced to PO3

BU3 Kevin Gilley
SH3 Reena Moton



UT2 Aaron Vincent receives his Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal.



Looking like someone who just spent two weeks in the woods, BU2 Raymond Wright none-the-less receives a Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

by the NMCB 5 Main Body CBR Team. After the decon, the Air Det relieved NMCB 15, who had been operating on the Main Body's right flank. The Air Det held 15's lines until the exercise was over a day later.

Overall, this was a very successful exercise for the Air Det, who can confidently say that they are prepared to go anywhere, at anytime, to accomplish their mission.



UT3 William Kahane (right) gets his Seabee Combat Warfare pin during an awards ceremony. NMCB-5 CO Cmdr. Richard Cook does the pinning.



They have reason to smile. BU3 Kevin Gilley (top) and SH3 Reena Moton are the Battalion's newest third class petty officers. They both were advanced under the command advancement program, or CAP.

Check out the NMCB-5
webpage at
[http://
www.seabee.navy.mil/
nmcb5/](http://www.seabee.navy.mil/nmcb5/)

Commanding Officer
NMCB-5 Unit 25294
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The Buzzword**



***NMCB-Five
"The Professionals"***

